

# Beowulf

## XI

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**THEN** from the moorland, by misty crags,  
with God's wrath laden, Grendel came.  
The monster was minded of mankind now  
sundry to seize in the stately house.  
Under welkin he walked, till the wine-palace there,  
gold-hall of men, he gladly discerned,  
flashing with fretwork. Not first time, this,  
that he the home of Hrothgar sought, --  
yet ne'er in his life-day, late or early,  
such hardy heroes, such hall-thanes, found!  
To the house the warrior walked apace,  
parted from peace; [footnote 1] the portal opened,  
though with forged bolts fast, when his fists had struck it,  
and baleful he burst in his blatant rage,  
the house's mouth. All hastily, then,  
o'er fair-paved floor the fiend trod on,  
ireful he strode; there streamed from his eyes  
fearful flashes, like flame to see.  
He spied in hall the hero-band,  
kin and clansmen clustered asleep,  
hardy liegemen. Then laughed his heart;  
for the monster was minded, ere morn should dawn,  
savage, to sever the soul of each,  
life from body, since lusty banquet  
waited his will! But Wyrð forbade him  
to seize any more of men on earth  
after that evening. Eagerly watched  
Hygelac's kinsman his cursed foe,  
how he would fare in fell attack.  
Not that the monster was minded to pause!  
Straightway he seized a sleeping warrior  
for the first, and tore him fiercely asunder,  
the bone-frame bit, drank blood in streams,  
swallowed him piecemeal: swiftly thus  
the lifeless corse was clear devoured,  
e'en feet and hands. Then farther he hied;  
for the hardy hero with hand he grasped,  
felt for the foe with fiendish claw,  
for the hero reclining, -- who clutched it boldly,  
prompt to answer, propped on his arm.  
Soon then saw that shepherd-of-evils  
that never he met in this middle-world,  
in the ways of earth, another wight

with heavier hand-gripe; at heart he feared,  
sorrowed in soul, -- none the sooner escaped!  
Fain would he flee, his fastness seek,  
the den of devils: no doings now  
such as oft he had done in days of old!

Then bethought him the hardy Hygelac-thane  
of his boast at evening: up he bounded,  
grasped firm his foe, whose fingers cracked.  
The fiend made off, but the earl close followed.  
The monster meant -- if he might at all --  
to fling himself free, and far away  
fly to the fens, -- knew his fingers' power  
in the gripe of the grim one. Gruesome march  
to Heorot this monster of harm had made!  
Din filled the room; the Danes were bereft,  
castle-dwellers and clansmen all,  
earls, of their ale. Angry were both  
those savage hall-guards: the house resounded.  
Wonder it was the wine-hall firm  
in the strain of their struggle stood, to earth  
the fair house fell not; too fast it was  
within and without by its iron bands  
craftily clamped; though there crashed from sill  
many a mead-bench -- men have told me --  
gay with gold, where the grim foes wrestled.  
So well had weened the wisest Scyldings  
that not ever at all might any man  
that bone-decked, brave house break asunder,  
crush by craft, -- unless clasp of fire  
in smoke engulfed it. -- Again uprose  
din redoubled. Danes of the North  
with fear and frenzy were filled, each one,  
who from the wall that wailing heard,  
God's foe sounding his grisly song,  
cry of the conquered, clamorous pain  
from captive of hell. Too closely held him  
he who of men in might was strongest  
in that same day of this our life.

#### **Footnotes.**

**1.**

That is, he was a "lost soul," doomed to hell.